

**U.S. Department of Education**  
**2019 National Blue Ribbon Schools Program**

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[X] Public or [ ] Non-public

For Public Schools only: (Check all that apply) [ ] Title I [ ] Charter [ ] Magnet [ ] Choice

Name of Principal Mr Jay Nelson

(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., etc.) (As it should appear in the official records)

Official School Name Dell Rapids Elementary School

(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 1216 North Garfield Avenue

(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

Dell Rapids SD 57022-1099  
City State Zip Code+4 (9 digits total)

County Minnehaha County

Telephone (605) 428-5473

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Web site/URL https://www.dr-k12.org/

E-mail julie.wynja@k12.sd.us

I have reviewed the information in this application, including the eligibility requirements on page 2 (Part I-Eligibility Certification), and certify, to the best of my knowledge, that it is accurate.

Date \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
(Principal's Signature)

Name of Superintendent\*Ms. Summer Schultz

(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other) E-mail summer.schultz@k12.sd.us

District Name Dell Rapids School District 49-3 Tel. (605) 428-5473

I have reviewed the information in this application, including the eligibility requirements on page 2 (Part I-Eligibility Certification), and certify, to the best of my knowledge, that it is accurate.

Date \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
(Superintendent's Signature)

Name of School Board

President/Chairperson Mr. Matthew Weiland

(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

I have reviewed the information in this application, including the eligibility requirements on page 2 (Part I-Eligibility Certification), and certify, to the best of my knowledge, that it is accurate.

Date \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
(School Board President's/Chairperson's Signature)

The original signed cover sheet only should be converted to a PDF file and uploaded via the online portal.

*\*Non-public Schools: If the information requested is not applicable, write N/A in the space.*

## **Part I – Eligibility Certification**

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The signatures on the first page of this application (cover page) certify that each of the statements below, concerning the school’s eligibility and compliance with U.S. Department of Education and National Blue Ribbon Schools requirements, are true and correct.

1. All nominated public schools must meet the state’s performance targets in reading (or English language arts) and mathematics and other academic indicators (i.e., attendance rate and graduation rate), for the all students group, including having participation rates of at least 95 percent using the most recent accountability results available for nomination.
2. To meet final eligibility, all nominated public schools must be certified by states prior to September 2019 in order to meet all eligibility requirements. Any status appeals must be resolved at least two weeks before the awards ceremony for the school to receive the award.
3. The school configuration includes one or more of grades K-12. Schools on the same campus with one principal, even a K-12 school, must apply as an entire school.
4. The school has been in existence for five full years, that is, from at least September 2013 and each tested grade must have been part of the school for the past three years.
5. The nominated school has not received the National Blue Ribbon Schools award in the past five years: 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, or 2018.
6. The nominated school has no history of testing irregularities, nor have charges of irregularities been brought against the school at the time of nomination. If irregularities are later discovered and proven by the state, the U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school’s application and/or rescind a school’s award.
7. The nominated school has not been identified by the state as “persistently dangerous” within the last two years.
8. The nominated school or district is not refusing Office of Civil Rights (OCR) access to information necessary to investigate a civil rights complaint or to conduct a district-wide compliance review.
9. The OCR has not issued a violation letter of findings to the school district concluding that the nominated school or the district as a whole has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes. A violation letter of findings will not be considered outstanding if OCR has accepted a corrective action plan from the district to remedy the violation.
10. The U.S. Department of Justice does not have a pending suit alleging that the nominated school or the school district, as a whole, has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes or the Constitution’s equal protection clause.
11. There are no findings of violations of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act in a U.S. Department of Education monitoring report that apply to the school or school district in question; or if there are such findings, the state or district has corrected, or agreed to correct, the findings.

## PART II - DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

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Data should be provided for the most recent school year (2018-2019) unless otherwise stated.

### DISTRICT

1. Number of schools in the district (per district designation):
- 1 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
  - 1 Middle/Junior high schools
  - 1 High schools
  - 0 K-12 schools
- 3 TOTAL

### SCHOOL (To be completed by all schools)

2. Category that best describes the area where the school is located:
- Urban or large central city
  - Suburban
  - Rural or small city/town
3. Number of students as of October 1, 2018 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent in applying school:

Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total
<b>PreK</b>	0	0	0
<b>K</b>	58	40	98
<b>1</b>	39	30	69
<b>2</b>	44	28	72
<b>3</b>	28	34	62
<b>4</b>	33	35	68
<b>5</b>	0	0	0
<b>6</b>	0	0	0
<b>7</b>	0	0	0
<b>8</b>	0	0	0
<b>9</b>	0	0	0
<b>10</b>	0	0	0
<b>11</b>	0	0	0
<b>12 or higher</b>	0	0	0
<b>Total Students</b>	202	167	369

\*Schools that house PreK programs should count preschool students **only** if the school administration is responsible for the program.

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school (if unknown, estimate):
- 1 % American Indian or Alaska Native
  - 0 % Asian
  - 1 % Black or African American
  - 1 % Hispanic or Latino
  - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
  - 94 % White
  - 3 % Two or more races
- 100 % Total**

(Only these seven standard categories should be used to report the racial/ethnic composition of your school. The Final Guidance on Maintaining, Collecting, and Reporting Racial and Ethnic Data to the U.S. Department of Education published in the October 19, 2007 *Federal Register* provides definitions for each of the seven categories.)

5. Student turnover, or mobility rate, during the 2017 – 2018 school year: 6%

If the mobility rate is above 15%, please explain.

This rate should be calculated using the grid below. The answer to (6) is the mobility rate.

<b>Steps For Determining Mobility Rate</b>	<b>Answer</b>
(1) Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1, 2017 until the end of the 2017-2018 school year	7
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2017 until the end of the 2017-2018 school year	15
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	22
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2017	372
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.06
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	6

6. English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 0%  
1 Total number ELL

Specify each non-English language represented in the school (separate languages by commas):  
Spanish

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 20%  
Total number students who qualify: 73

8. Students receiving special education services: 22 %  
82 Total number of students served

Indicate below the number of students with disabilities according to conditions designated in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Do not add additional conditions. It is possible that students may be classified in more than one condition.

- |                                  |  |
|----------------------------------|--|
| <u>3</u> Autism                  | <u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities                 |
| <u>0</u> Deafness                | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment                 |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness          | <u>3</u> Other Health Impaired                 |
| <u>4</u> Developmental Delay     | <u>19</u> Specific Learning Disability         |
| <u>1</u> Emotional Disturbance   | <u>47</u> Speech or Language Impairment        |
| <u>0</u> Hearing Impairment      | <u>1</u> Traumatic Brain Injury                |
| <u>4</u> Intellectual Disability | <u>0</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness |

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 1
10. Use Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs), rounded to nearest whole numeral, to indicate the number of school staff in each of the categories below:

	<b>Number of Staff</b>
Administrators	1
Classroom teachers including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	20
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher, etc.	10
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	10
Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	2

11. Average student-classroom teacher ratio, that is, the number of students in the school divided by the FTE of classroom teachers, e.g., 22:1 19:1

12. Show daily student attendance rates. Only high schools need to supply yearly graduation rates.

<b>Required Information</b>	2017-2018	2016-2017	2015-2016	2014-2015	2013-2014
Daily student attendance	97%	86%	92%	90%	97%
High school graduation rate	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

13. **For high schools only, that is, schools ending in grade 12 or higher.**

Show percentages to indicate the post-secondary status of students who graduated in Spring 2018.

<b>Post-Secondary Status</b>	
Graduating class size	0
Enrolled in a 4-year college or university	0%
Enrolled in a community college	0%
Enrolled in career/technical training program	0%
Found employment	0%
Joined the military or other public service	0%
Other	0%

14. Indicate whether your school has previously received a National Blue Ribbon Schools award.

Yes  No

If yes, select the year in which your school received the award. 1994

15. In a couple of sentences, provide the school’s mission or vision statement.

Empowering each other to excel.

16. **For public schools only**, if the school is a magnet, charter, or choice school, explain how students are chosen to attend.

## **PART III – SUMMARY**

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The Dell Rapids Public School District (DRPS) is located in the town of Dell Rapids, which is known as "The Little City with the Big Attractions". It lies in southeastern South Dakota, approximately 15 miles north of Sioux Falls, the state's largest city. The gradual expansion of the town's residential areas and businesses are moving west toward the interstate. Dell Rapids was established in 1871 and surrounds the banks of the Big Sioux River. This community of approximately 3824 people thrives over the foundation of a rich vein of red quartzite that run 2600 feet deep and hundreds of miles wide. The scenic rock cliffs called the "dells" are carved out of the banks of the Big Sioux and are a beautiful part of the attraction of this city. The great farmland and the quartzite quarry are the heart and soul of Dell Rapids. As you can imagine, our Quarrier name originated from the quartzite which lies beneath the town.

Dell Rapids elementary is one of three public schools in the district. Students at Dell Rapids Elementary are predominantly of white Caucasian decent, and twenty percent of our students qualify for economic disadvantaged status. Looking at enrollment data for the past five-years, Dell Rapids has shown steady growth at our elementary school. The community of Dell Rapids also has a private school, Dell Rapids St. Mary's. Staff from Dell Rapids Elementary provide special education and title services for identified students at this parochial school.

Currently, the Dell Rapids Elementary School serves approximately 370 students. The building principal also serves as the district's special education director. The community generously supported a building bond referendum and the new school opened its doors in January, 2012. Currently the elementary houses early childhood special education, kindergarten prep, and grades K-4. When the new elementary building was designed, it was built in the confidence of continued growth in school enrollment. Since that time, the elementary school has proudly shown a 12.5% growth of enrollment.

Academic success doesn't happen by chance and the district feels the inception of the district's kindergarten prep program in 2011 offers a systematic opportunity to target incoming learners prior to their kindergarten experience. This program was intended to provide a structured learning environment for students who meet the age eligibility requirement for kindergarten, but do not demonstrate social, emotional, and/or academic readiness for the regular kindergarten environment. Students in our kindergarten prep program receive a full academic year of readiness curriculum assuring these learners are ready for the rigor of kindergarten. Over the past seven years, our elementary has seen this program grow into two classrooms.

DRPS prides itself in educating the "whole child" and the elementary school is able to provide unique opportunities that combine a strong core academic program with the 21st century skills and emotional learning support that young learners benefit from.

Elementary students benefit from intentional movement and physical activity. Our elementary physical education instructor has been recognized by the Society for Health and Physical Educators of South Dakota (SHAPE SD) for providing a quality physical education program as described through the National Association for Sport and Physical Education (NASPE) standards of excellence. Having students participate in innovative, fitness-based learning experiences is critical to the overall educational environment we strive to create.

The Dell Rapids Elementary School also provides opportunities and resources to support the emotional well-being of students. A United Way partnership has made the PATH program available to families. PATH allows students access to a licensed mental health practitioner right in the school building. Serving students in the school removes barriers such as travel and parent time off work, allowing students instant access to services. Another partnership that provides social and emotional assistance is the Carroll Institute. Currently, the district brings in individuals to assist with friendship groups, and emotional learning support for students and parents. The use of adult mentors also provides additional opportunities for relationship building and social interaction.

Positive Action has also been implemented in the elementary school through a grant awarded by the South

Dakota Council of Juvenile Services. Positive Action funding allows our school to function under a model that ensures an equitable learning environment. Among other components, infusing the “Think, Act, Feel” verbiage and practices within our school culture helps every learner to be educated on a level surface. Positive Action curriculum addresses areas we feel need intentional support including: disability differences, bullying, financial deficiencies, broken homes and mixed families. Equipping our staff and students with the Positive Action concepts provokes our students to make positive decisions while also becoming empathetic learners.

DRES believes students and staff do their best work when they feel safe. Homeland security and community grants have financially assisted the district to purchase surveillance cameras in the elementary building, panic buttons in the office, and a staff communication application called CrisisGo.



## **PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION**

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### **1. Core Curriculum:**

#### **1a. Reading/English language arts:**

The Dell Rapids Elementary School uses the Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Journeys reading program to meet the diverse needs of their students, from kindergarten through grade 4. This research-based program aligns with the Common Core State Standards and includes the key elements of reading instruction – from learning the alphabetic principle and decoding, through comprehension of complex texts – and writing instruction. The basal series provides the foundation of the elementary school’s reading instruction and is supplemented and enhanced with additional resources from distinguished teacher-authors such as Fountas and Pinnell and Lucy Calkins.

The elementary teachers systemically and routinely collect data through a variety of mediums to identify student needs and monitor growth. The assessments include: Journey’s weekly assessments in decoding, phonics, grammar, vocabulary and comprehension; Journey’s unit benchmark assessments; fluency measurements; running records; observations; DIBELS assessments; and Renaissance-learning online assessments. The comprehensive data from these assessments are used to drive instruction, form learning groups, and qualify students for specific programs such as Title I and peer study buddies. Scaffolded reading instruction is provided to students through small group instruction and a reader’s workshop using materials such as Journey’s Write-In Readers and leveled readers.

The Dell Rapids Public Elementary School also uses specialized software to meet the needs of struggling students. Imagine Learning, an individualized language and literacy software program with actionable data, is used by identified K-2 students on a daily basis. The systematic literacy instruction provided by this program enhances student performance and provides meaningful feedback to both students and teachers. Another meaningful, computerized reading intervention is Fast ForWord. This program targets the root causes of reading struggles and provides extensive practice in both language and reading. Other online technology-based supports include Epic, Moby Max, Reading A-Z, Headsprout, and RAZ Kids. These programs assist in phonemic awareness, phonics instruction, fluency development, and reading comprehension skills.

#### **1b. Mathematics:**

The Dell Rapids Elementary School uses the Envision Math program as the foundation of their mathematics instruction. This research-based program aligns with the Common Core State Standards and includes resources that are designed to meet the needs of students at various levels of concept mastery. Lessons are designed to achieve understanding through modeling, guided instruction, and independent practice.

The Envision Math program was chosen for many reasons. First, conceptual understanding is prominent. Students don’t merely memorize mathematical procedures; they are taught how and why mathematical methods achieve specific outcomes. Second, much emphasis is placed on problem solving. This emphasis requires students to construct viable arguments, look for and make use of structure, use appropriate tools strategically, and attend to precision. Third, the program includes a variety of differentiation resources. Tutorial videos, differentiated worksheets, online and hands-on games, and varied instructional supports for educators are included in the program.

The elementary teachers systemically and routinely collect data through a variety of mediums to identify student needs and monitor growth. The assessments include daily common core review, daily math problems, daily enrichment story problems, the principal’s math problem of the day, concept and skill practice, topic assessments, unit assessments, DIBELS assessments, and Renaissance-learning online assessments. The comprehensive data from these measurements are used to drive instruction, form learning groups, and qualify students for specific programs such as Title I and peer study buddies. Scaffolded math instruction is provided to students through small group instruction and differentiated learning activities.

The Dell Rapids Public Elementary School also uses online tools to meet the needs of our math learners. IXL Math, Moby Max, Prodigy, and miscellaneous games like Math Magician and Math Playground are regularly used to enrich and extend the students' mathematical proficiency.

### **1c. Science:**

The Dell Rapids Elementary School uses the Foss Next Generation program as the foundation of their science instruction. This standards-based curriculum helps students build their understanding of science through active investigations. Formative assessments, science notebooks, resource books, and technology are used in conjunction with the active investigations. This program was chosen because of its definite link to state science standards and student-led learning approach.

The Foss Next Generation science program meets the needs of every learner. Investigation is driven by a focus question and a foundation of learning is established through teacher-facilitated discussion. Vocabulary and science concepts are extended through collaborative discussion and active investigation. Data is recorded in a notebook to enhance and solidify scientific understanding. Quick checks are used to monitor the students understanding throughout the lesson. The content is also cross-curricular, as the students read information, use mathematical processes in their investigations, and record their learning with words and/or graphic features. Assessment is embedded within each lesson through discussion, science notebook completion, and quick checks.

Several technology applications are incorporated into science instruction. The FOSSweb provides several resources: eGuides provide teachers access beyond the classroom; preparation videos provide detailed investigation information; interactive whiteboard activities provide engaging practice and formative assessments; virtual investigations, streaming videos, and tutorials extend student learning. Other world wide web resources include BrainPop, Mystery Science, Moby Max, and other topic-based sites.

### **1d. Social studies/history/civic learning and engagement**

The Dell Rapids Elementary School uses the Houghton Mifflin Social Studies (2008) program as the foundation of their Social Studies instruction. This standards-based curriculum includes a textbook and/or big-book for whole-class learning, and also includes several resources (leveled readers, magazines, etc.) to meet the needs of our diverse learners. In addition to this curriculum, the Dell Rapids Elementary School uses the "Positive Action" program to teach character education, civic skills, and personal development. Junior Achievement is another program that is utilized to connect with the community and incorporate real-world applications.

The Houghton Mifflin Social Studies (2008) curriculum has many resources to differentiate instruction. First, each unit has core lessons to teach critical concepts and topics that meet the state standards. Diverse learning needs are met through an extension lesson that emphasizes core learning concepts in a different way, such as through a biography, literature link, or primary source. Second, the program contains Fountas and Pinnell leveled books to extend and support the students' learning. These books can be read independently, or within small groups. Third, the social studies concepts are integrated into other curricular areas to achieve comprehensive understanding.

The Positive Action program is implemented through guidance and classroom instruction. Specific, systematic instruction is provided to the students in the areas of character education, civic skills, and personal development. The students have multiple opportunities to apply and reflect on their learning.

The volunteer-delivered program, Junior Achievement, is utilized to connect with the community and educate students on work-readiness, entrepreneurship, and financial literacy skills.

In addition to these resources, teachers also incorporate the following into their daily instruction to meet the Social Studies standards: Scholastic News, CNN Student News, Time for Kids, Weekly Reader, and monthly holiday themes.

**1e. For secondary schools:**

**1f. For schools that offer preschool for three- and four-year old students:**

**2. Other Curriculum Areas:**

We feel so very fortunate at Dell Rapids Elementary to have the accessibility and support from a number of other curriculum areas outside of the general classroom curriculum. From the fine arts to physical education to character education to supplementary hands-on programs our students at the elementary have the opportunity to be exposed to a plethora of learning experiences outside of their core classroom curriculum. Further, we strive to use these outside curriculum areas to support what students are already learning within their classrooms.

All students in grades kindergarten prep through fourth grades are given a rotating daily activity schedule to include physical education, music education, and art education. Each day all of our students are exposed to a forty-five-minute block of time in one of these curricular areas. Dell Rapids Elementary has one full time physical education teacher, one full time music teacher, and one full time art teacher. Each of these staff have their rooms within our building to provide their standards-based grade level instruction. Highlights of our music education program include an annual school wide Christmas program with features the performing talents of our fourth grade, exposure to early musical instruments including ukuleles and recorders, and auditions for region honor choirs. Our art education program exposes our students to a variety of mediums of art. Student art displays can be found through our hallways Handpicked student artwork is displayed and rotated on an art gallery wall in the elementary school office for visitors and staff to enjoy. Our physical education program seeks to broaden the horizons for our students by giving our students the experience non-traditional games and activities that they would not play at home. Some of the more unique curricular units in our physical education program include cricket, archery, KanJam, Spikeball, and snowshoeing.

In addition to our rotating activity schedule, all students are offered guidance within the classroom setting every other week. During these visits, our guidance counselor is with a classroom of students for thirty minutes. Her focus is to support our Positive Action school wide curriculum and provide character building education. From these classroom activities our students have participated in kindness challenges, healthy living activities, friendship building groups, and conflict resolutions. We believe that incorporating these activities into our students' schedule helps to promote the foundation of soft skill development that our students can take with them beyond their elementary years.

Library is another part of our students' weekly schedule. Typical to many elementary schools, the Dell Rapids elementary school library gives students the chance to explore and check out books at their interest and/or reading levels. However, over the past two years our goal has been to enhance our students' experience during their library time. We were fortunate to be able to additional time onto "library time" each week. Now, students begin with the traditional library experience. The second half of their time in our media center then focuses on small group makerspace activities. These hands-on activities allow students to be creative, innovative, and technologically educated. With the knowledge that all students learn differently, this supports hands-on learning at a deeper level as they are engaged in creative thinking experiences.

One final supplemental curriculum area is our elementary school garden. In a partnership with Ground Works – Midwest (GWM), our elementary constructed raised garden beds on the south side of our building. This unique learning program helps teach our students about gardening, healthy eating, environmental stewardship, and agricultural awareness. Each spring our elementary starts seeds in our portable greenhouse, which is located in our library. Students are able to watch as seedlings grow and are then are involved in planting the plants in our raised beds. Teachers take classroom time to spend in the garden with their students throughout the spring and the fall. This gives our students the chance to experience the growing

cycle of plants and the harvest. Further, students have access to the gardens outside of school hours, which allows our families to enjoy this activity and space together.

### **3. Special Populations:**

Dell Rapids Elementary is a targeted assistance Title I school, where twenty percent of our students are eligible for free or reduced-price lunches. As a school we strive to provide differentiated instruction within the classroom to meet the academic needs of all our students. Our building utilizes the online reading program Imagine Learning for all students in kindergarten-prep, kindergarten, and first grades. We also offer Imagine Learning supports in second through fourth grade for students that are targeted as needing additional reading practice and supports. These students are identified through teacher recommendation, STAR reading assessments, and benchmark DIBELS assessments. Students are offered thirty minutes of online Imagine Learning daily throughout the school year. With two hundred twenty-five licenses for Imagine Learning, our elementary can target over half of our student enrollment.

For students requiring more strategic supports, the elementary provides small group supplementary instruction in reading and math through Title I services. The district employs two Title I teachers who work with small groups of students in kindergarten through fourth grades. With parent permission, students are placed in Title I reading and/or math based upon academic performance and/or DIBELS benchmark data. Title teachers continue to monitor and document their students' progress through DIBELS assessments throughout the school year. Assessment data is provided to classroom teachers and parents at the minimum of every school quarter.

When students are not meeting the academic rigor of the classroom with the supports of differentiated instruction, best practice accommodations, Imagine Learning, and/or Title I services our elementary implements intervention recommendations from our Problem-Solving Team (PST). PST is made up of general education teachers, special education teachers, Title I teachers, school psychologist and administration. This team of educators meet to review and document data of individual student progress and recommend implementation of interventions to support the student in their areas of need. PST then continues to meet routinely to review the student's progress with the implementation of interventions and modifies interventions as needed for student success. Should a student demonstrate minimal to no success with the interventions, the team typically recommends a referral for special education testing.

Dell Rapids Elementary employs three full time special education teachers, two full-time speech therapists, part-time school psychologist, and part-time physical and occupational therapists to focus on the needs of our students with disabilities. Students in our building demonstrate a wide range of needs and disabilities. These range from students needing specialized instruction and supports in the general classroom to students requiring alternate curriculum and 1:1 supports throughout their day. Regardless of their needs, all students are integrated with their non-disabled peers for at minimum lunch, recess, music, art, and gym. Our last on-site special education review was in December 2018 and currently the Dell Rapids School has met all state/federal IDEA compliance.

Although, we do not currently have linguistically diverse populations the district has shown an increase in the need to address English language learners. In 2015, the district employed an ELL coordinator to manage the needs of these students. The district uses the Cornerstone curriculum for all identified ELL students and annually tracks their English progression and proficiency through ACCESS testing. The ELL coordinator then plans their classroom supports accordingly.

Dell Rapids Elementary currently does not provide an organized program for students that are identified as performing above grade level. Individual classroom teachers work to differentiate instruction for these students to provide above grade level challenges to engage these students at their learning levels. Online programs such as Imagine Learning, Raz Kids, and IXL math are utilized by teachers to provide individualized learning activities for students at advanced levels. We also incorporate Makerspace activities once per week which can provide additional higher-level thinking hands on learning challenges for our advanced students.



## PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

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### **1. School Climate/Culture:**

With the assistance of our full-time guidance counselor, our elementary incorporates Positive Action curriculum into each of our classrooms. The guidance counselor brings Positive Action curricular activities into each of our classrooms on the bi-weekly basis. Classroom teachers then promote Positive Action curriculum into their classrooms throughout the school week. All certified elementary staff are trained in Positive Action and use the programs' language and practices in their respective classrooms throughout their day. With positive action, our elementary has taken on the motto, "when you do good, you feel good". This philosophy of feeling good about ourselves when we do positive actions helps focus our staff and students on emphasizing positive actions to promote a positive and healthy climate among the entire elementary building.

Perhaps our school's most well-known initiative is our You Rock program. Taking the theme from our community's pride in our quartzite quarry, the elementary school developed a character building You Rock program. Elementary students who demonstrate positive character traits connected with Quarrier Pride are recognized by elementary staff throughout each school week. Quarrier pride traits include quality, uplifting, accepting, respectful, reliable, inspirational, encouraging, responsible, and supportive. All students receiving a You Rock award then receive a positive note home, You Rock sticker, and an actual quartzite rock to keep in their classroom. The elementary school then collectively keeps a tally of all the rocks that have been awarded to students each week, and work for a schoolwide incentive when our rock collection goal is reached. Our students take great pride in their You Rock recognition. All staff at our elementary go above and beyond to assure that all students are awarded a You Rock through the school year.

It is exciting to see that our You Rock program has evolved into our staff as well. Staff can also be recognized by students, parents, or other staff for their positive contribution to the district. Nomination forms for these accolades are submitted to our district superintendent. Those nominated are recognized by our district administration, on the district's social media, and in the local newspapers. Additionally, thanks to donations from our local quarry, those nominated receive an engraved "You Rock" stone to keep in their classroom or work area. This program has recognized the efforts of so many staff from classroom teachers to custodians to educational associates. At Dell Rapids, we recognize that each and everyone's efforts are important in our success.

### **2. Engaging Families and Community:**

Communication and interactions with our families and community is of the utmost importance at Dell Rapids Elementary. Teachers are encouraged to frequently share with families the celebrations and achievements of their classrooms and individual students. Classroom communications are done weekly, if not daily, through newsletters, school/home communication apps, phone calls, and email. Building information is communicated with families is through letters, emails, and mass texts. We also utilize social media and school district live feed communication on our website to keep families and the community aware of the happenings within our buildings and district.

Parents and family members are frequently seen and encouraged to visit our school. This can especially be noted during lunchtime. We enjoy having the presence of parents among our students. We support parent volunteers in the classroom and appreciate when parents are available to share their time and talents with our classrooms. Annually, we host a Title I night for families of students receiving Title I services. Over the years, activities for this evening have included mystery night, art and canvas activity, college sport team guest readers, and local authors and illustrators. During this event, we also take the time to further educate families on how best to support math and reading skills in the home.

On the weekly basis, you will see community members and high school students volunteering as mentors for our elementary students. Mentoring sessions focus on a variety of activities which may include homework help, academic help, or social-emotional support. Our guidance counselor works closely to pair

students with mentors that will best support their academic and/or social-emotional needs. Adult mentors are trained through a non-profit agency and have been given tools to help support students who need an additional adult connection in their lives. At Dell Rapids Elementary see the value of giving students the opportunity of making lasting personal connections outside of the classroom.

To assist our efforts for continues improvement, our school annually collects data from our students' families through online surveys. Information gathered from these surveys is used to prioritize new goals and determine progress for areas currently being targeted. The district encourages all families to give honest feedback in our efforts for building and district improvement. Our most recent survey had one hundred eighteen participants at the elementary level. Results showed that a majority of our families feel our elementary school provides a safe learning environment and that our teachers are meeting the learning needs of their child.

### **3. Professional Development:**

DRPS truly embraces the notion that the quality of instruction directly correlates with student academic success. The school's professional development plan contributes to a school culture required to achieve and sustain continuous improvement. This culture also promotes a shared sense of responsibility for the success of each student. Each year, the Board of Education works with administrators to define professional development goals. The overarching district goal states: Professional Development at DRPS will enhance instructional methods and provide staff with professional growth. Although the district goal is vague, the annual development process requires a statement of current value, future objectives, and an action plan to achieve the intended results. This process insures that accurate data helps drives the annual professional development plan for all employees.

DPRS is AdvancED accredited, which guarantees our professional development system aligns with best practices for all employees. The district administers staff surveys, and a Teacher Leadership Team has been implemented to ensure teacher perspectives drive the professional development plan. This team works closely with district administrators to create the annual action plan for professional development activities. The team helps define an annual priority which is embedded in professional activities throughout the school year. Clearly defined needs are shared only after a thorough analysis of student and staff data is complete. Annual action plans lay out specific activities which transpire during scheduled professional development time.

Along with the process described above, the district has hired a curriculum expert who has been able to identify curriculum and instructional needs throughout the elementary school. This administrator not only provides traditional assistance with curriculum and staff development needs, she also works with the building principal with evaluation assistance. We feel each component of our professional development plan impacts student achievement and contributes to the success of our elementary school.

### **4. School Leadership:**

The principal's philosophy at Dell Rapids Elementary is Together Everyone Achieves More (TEAM). We credit the concept of teams working together under leadership to assist in unifying believe systems, instructional practices, and student learning. The building administrator helps to foster team development through routine staff meetings and grade level meetings. Further, the building principal utilizes monthly staff activities to nurture a positive climate where all staff are reminded of the importance that they play on our elementary team. The principal projects to all staff that all are to be a positive model to our students on the daily basis of how a team works together for the success of everyone.

With the assets of having a district curriculum director and a district special education director, the elementary school has even more leadership partners to assist in our student's success. The curriculum director meets with teams of teachers on the routine basis to review current curriculum and future curriculum needs. The curriculum team, under the leadership of the director, then communicates with their grade level team of teachers to disseminate the information from curriculum meetings. Through this process, our elementary can analyze the strengths and weaknesses in our curriculum and instruction and

formulate improvement plans moving forward. The curriculum director also provides staff training on instructional practices for all elementary teachers, as well as offering book study groups to teachers outside of school hours.

The district special education director supports general education teachers and special education teachers who have students with diagnosed disabilities or who have students with suspected diagnosed disabilities. Our special education director assists in all IEP meetings for students throughout the year, and also will attend Problem Solving Team meetings to help assist in pre-referral interventions for students. The district recognizes the importance of this leadership position to assure that all students with disabilities or suspected disabilities receive appropriate evaluations and services. The special education director further assists special education staff with in-service and training for IDEA compliance.

Lastly, our elementary school implements a mentor program for all first-year teachers in our building. This two-year mentor program pairs veteran teachers with new incoming teachers. These teachers then work together to establish annual goals for the new teachers. Mentoring sessions also address developing improved instructional practices, classroom behavioral management, and addressing academic, behavioral, and social needs of students. We are so fortunate at our elementary school to have veteran teachers willing to share their knowledge base with our newest teachers and have found the benefits for both teachers involved in the process.



## **Part VI – STRATEGIES FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS**

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At Dell Rapids Elementary, we are extremely proud of the programming we have put into place for our district's youngest learners. The 2011-2012 school year was the inception of the elementary's kindergarten prep program. The Dell Rapids elementary kindergarten prep program is a differentiated program that is designed to help the kindergarten-aged child transition into a routine of every day, all-day school. Students in this program are part of our elementary school enrollment and teachers are under the administration of the elementary principal. Over the past, seven years our elementary has seen this program grow from one classroom of eighteen into one currently serving two classrooms with a of a total of thirty-one students.

With the blending of early childhood standards and kindergarten standards, our kindergarten prep program provides a supportive environment for children and focus on social and emotional development, physical and motor development, as well as, academic skills needed to prepare children for the rigor of kindergarten. Research suggests that children greatly benefit from programs that address school readiness. The children in our kindergarten prep program are nurtured emotionally, socially, and academically to achieve their potential and feel valued as learners. A combination of small group instruction and whole group activities allows the children to develop as cooperative learners. The kindergarten prep program experience fosters a safe learning environment and fuels the children's natural curiosity and desire to learn.

In the early spring of each school year, the district hosts a kindergarten round-up event. Here, parents can bring their soon-to-be kindergarten aged children in for an hour-long screening of their child's kindergarten readiness skills. Teachers and parents then review the results of the assessment. Our kindergarten and kindergarten prep teachers make recommendations to families on the placement of their child either into kindergarten prep or into kindergarten for the upcoming school year. The assessment used for this screening is self-developed by our highly-qualified staff from kindergarten, kindergarten prep, and early childhood special education programs. Over the past seven years, we have found that this assessment paired with parent input has rightfully placed so many of our students into kindergarten prep.

Given that our district currently does not provide regular early childhood programming for students, we feel that the kindergarten prep opportunity helps us to better serve incoming kindergarten-aged students who may not have been afforded the change of receiving early childhood services. As our students transition out of kindergarten prep and into kindergarten the following, our teachers are seeing more and more increased readiness for the rigor of kindergarten. Most importantly, we see these students coming into kindergarten with confidence and leadership among their peers, which carries on throughout their elementary experience.